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PRESS RELEASE

# State Releases 2017 Assessment Results

Results Include First Next-Generation MCAS Tests from Spring 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

10/18/2017

Executive Office of Education

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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**MALDEN** — The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today released 2017 MCAS and school and district accountability and assistance levels. The results include scores from the next-generation MCAS, an updated version of the test that was given for the first time in spring 2017 to students in grades 3-8 in English language arts and mathematics. Eventually, all MCAS tests will be next-generation MCAS.

The new MCAS assessment was created with input from hundreds of teachers following a thorough review and update of the state's curriculum frameworks. The next-generation MCAS establishes high

expectations to better reflect whether students are on track for the next grade level and ultimately for college and a career.

The next-generation MCAS is a reformatted test from the legacy MCAS, and the scores are not comparable.

This summer, 125 Massachusetts educators worked together to review test questions and student responses and compared them to what students need to know to be successful in the next grade. The fact that approximately 50 percent of the students who took the test this spring were Meeting Expectations or above in each of the grades and subjects reflects the scoring standards set by the teachers.

"I'd like to thank the hundreds of Massachusetts educators who have participated in the development of our updated curriculum frameworks and their accompanying assessments," **Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Jeff Wulfson said.** "Our classroom teachers and school administrators, who know our students best, guided us in setting expectations that are both challenging and achievable."

The next-generation MCAS was developed after the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted in November 2015 to create an updated next-generation Massachusetts-specific test administered by computer. It is an updated version of the nearly 20-year-old MCAS assessment and focuses on students' critical thinking abilities, ability to apply their knowledge and make connections between reading and writing. It gives a clearer signal of readiness for the next grade level, and the majority of students in grades 3-8 took the next-generation MCAS on a computer. The Department expects that the move to computer-based testing should be complete by spring 2019.

"With the help of hundreds of educators, we revised our curriculum standards to boost student achievement and revamped the assessments to ensure we have a tool to appropriately gauge whether a student is prepared for the next grade level and eventually college or career," **Education Secretary James Peyser said.** "While our schools rank among the top performing in the nation, we want to ensure we prepare all our students for future successes."

Massachusetts educators set the new standards to help signal students' readiness for the next grade level and indicate when students might need additional help to succeed. Ultimately, this will give students a better sense of what they need to do to be prepared for college or other post-secondary training.

In addition to the new assessment, a new, more comprehensive accountability system is being designed to comply with the recent federal Every Student Succeeds Act. Because of the new assessment and the development of a new accountability system, most elementary and middle schools did not receive an accountability rating this year.

"Massachusetts educators and students will rise to high expectations as they have in the past and as they do every day," **said Burlington Public Schools Superintendent Eric Conti**, president-elect of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and one of the many Massachusetts educators who contributed to the next-generation MCAS. "I am hopeful that with this new assessment this year and the accountability system that will be rolled out next year, parents will have stronger indicators of their child's growth and equity of opportunity."

Next-generation MCAS scores fall into four categories: Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations and Not Meeting Expectations.

Approximately 50 percent of grades 3–8 students are already scoring in the Meeting or Exceeding Expectations categories on the new test. Some students will find that they scored Proficient on the legacy MCAS in 2016 but only Partially Meeting Expectations on the next-generation MCAS in 2017. Students, parents and educators should keep in mind that:

- In general, the new standards for Meeting Expectations are more rigorous than the standards for reaching the Proficient level on the legacy MCAS.
- Spring 2017 is a **baseline year** for a new test in grades 3–8, and spring 2017 scores **should not be compared** to previous years' scores.
- This year's 10th graders did not take the next-generation MCAS.
- High school students are still taking the legacy MCAS tests. The next-generation tests will be introduced at the high school level in spring 2019, but the minimum passing level is not expected to change until later years.
- The approximately 50 percent of grades 3–8 students who are already scoring in the Meeting or Exceeding Expectations categories is not the result of a grading curve; it is where the scores fell after educators set the standards. The educators valued both readiness for the next grade level and consistent expectations across grades.
- A higher percentage of students are likely to score Meeting Expectations or above in future years as students and schools become more familiar with the tests' expectations.
- The consistency of the scoring standards is one benefit of creating the entire grades 3–8 next-generation MCAS at once. The legacy MCAS began in isolated grades and was introduced in other grades in subsequent years, each time requiring a separate standard setting process for that specific test. That meant that while, for instance, the fourth grade scoring standards were the same every year, they did not necessarily reflect the same level of expectations as the third- or fifth-grade scoring standards.

Parents should receive their child's scores from their school district in late October or early November.

For more information on the next-generation MCAS, visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/>.

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